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he might have soldiers to help in the battle, he married and begot sons and daughters. His wife died, and he married again. His second wife deserted him. Another woman who understood him, but who would have thwarted his ambition, he resolutely put out of his life. One by one his children, crushed by the tyranny of "the farm," deserted him: one of his sons, after ridiculing his father's political friends in some scurvy verses during a campaign, went to London and became a good-for-nothing. One of his daughters, starved for love, ran away with a drunken sailor, and eventually became a woman of the streets. Reuben was hated, deserted, betrayed, bereaved, and he seems to have felt no emotions save pride and anger. One of his sons became a famous lawyer: Reuben regretted that he had not remained on the farm. Another, well-loved, was killed in the Boer war: a shock, but not a tragedy. Reuben was winning then—winning his long fight with the Moor; and this was the thought that would remain with him though heaven and earth passed away. At sixty this splendid animal was in his prime. At eighty-five, he had conquered, and had not a soul to love him. He died a happy man.

The question as to whether this story is really big and impressive or merely little and depressing must be decided with reference to its meaning. If there is grandeur in the spectacle of a human being so immersed in nature that he moves on his way with the resistless force and with the callousness to suffering of Nature herself, then the story in all its monotony is big—the horizon widens to contain the thought, and the farm-house becomes a castle. But if this be not true, if Reuben must be regarded as merely a poor obsessed creature who has missed the best in life because Nature drugged his higher thought-centers, then the story is not big but sordid—not even tragically sordid, for Reuben died happy.

Nature, not man, is the hero of the story. It is Nature in Reuben that triumphs over Boarzell and over the little short-lived Kingdoms of love and happiness that his children raised.

A breaking down of the distinction between Man and Nature—such seems to be the essential meaning, impressive or not, of this forceful story.

RODMOOR. By JOHN COWPER POWYS. New York: G. Arnold Shaw, 1916.

When Baltazar Stark, in John Cowper Powys' new novel, *Rodmoor*, turned his gaze inward, what he saw was "simply the real truth of life, its frozen purposelessness. Most men visualize existence through a blurring cloud of personal passion, either erotic or imaginative. They suffer, but they suffer from illusion. What separated Baltazar from the majority was his power of seeing things in absolute colorlessness—unconfused by any sort of distorting mirage. Thus

what he saw with his soul was the ghastly loneliness of his soul. He saw this frozen, hollow, empty space, and he saw it as the natural country in which his soul dwelt, its unutterable reality, its appalling truth." Baltazar, you see, is at once the sanest and, from the viewpoint of common sense, the most insane person in the story; and he is the story's real protagonist.

Rodmoor is a story of fatal, too human, passions, of blind soul struggles, set in a little village on the East Anglian Coast. For unity's sake the scene is carefully harmonized with the inner motive of the story. It is worth remarking that the kind of unity that is most highly prized by a certain type of writer is the unity of effect conferred by landscape and environment; and this leads sometimes to a kind of childishness, a kind of old-womanish superstitiousness, a Castle-of-Otranto-like romanticism. Mr. Powys does not altogether escape this tendency. In his story Nature sometimes ceases to be an Arctic void and is suspected, like any old witch, of "exercising a malign influence"; the sea (which is really the chorus in the drama) is accused of hypnotizing otherwise sane persons, with its ceaseless, terrifying voice; at critical junctures fiery clouds point threatening fingers at poor bedeviled mortals. An owl pecks at a dead woman's eyes, merely to remind us that Nature may be as gruesome as a folk story.

But it would be a mistake to suppose that *Rodmoor* is merely a study in the effect of environment upon sensitive spirits. The meaning of the tale goes deeper than any "call of the wild" or than any of those psychological hypotheses that in the hands of certain writers lend themselves so agreeably to dramatic development. It delves down into the irrational, into the sub-human, and it finds awful realities just under the skin of consciousness.

It is perhaps not worth while to summarize the story; for in summary it could appear hardly otherwise than as a rather violently romantic drama of passion, played by oddly chosen characters, and ending rather confusedly in death and in unexplained gloom. The qualities to note are the extraordinary and disturbing reality of the thing; its awful plausibility; its terrible success in rousing sympathy and in quelling it; its insane humor and its humorous insanity. What could be more amusing than Dr. Fingal Raughty's Micawber-like whimsies? What sweeter or more assuring than Mr. Traherne's glorious Platonism? And yet these people make us afraid.

There is, to be sure, a "normal" person in the tale. Nance, the heroine, is an instinctive woman, always true to type. Nance is lovable. . . . Oh, yes; there is a world of common-sense, and satisfying feeling, and "human" joys and sorrows—and ginger shall be hot in the mouth. . . . But is *our* world *the* world, or anything like it?

Genius may work toward the supra-rational or toward the sub-rational. Neither extreme is understood. Perhaps, sometime, the broken arc will be joined, and then we shall see how the unknown above joins the unknown below.

Perhaps this story of Mr. Powys' is just a pathological study; but perhaps it is something more: it possesses at least that thrill of the unknown which is also the thrill of beauty, and this gives it a claim. Pragmatically the world must decide whether negations can have a "human" meaning, whether the irrational can be domesticated in popular literature. Imaginably, we may become positivists, in fiction at least, and shut out the unknown. But probably not. Probably a story that takes us so thrillingly and dizzily over the verge of what we call sanity as does this of Mr. Powys' will always be welcomed.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HAPPY LIFE. By ELIZABETH CHRISTOPHERS HOBSON. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916.

The title which Mrs. Hobson gave to the chapters of reminiscence which she wrote at the earnest solicitation of her friends is significant. To live a long life happily is a rare and impressive achievement. It is this fact, as much as the inherent interest of Mrs. Hobson's memoirs, which makes it a thing to be glad of that her recollections, originally printed for a private circle, have been given to the world. The observations of life contained in this book, kindly, cheery, keen and witty, are so pervaded by that assured strength of character which (in contradistinction to a certain uncomfortable perspicacity not uncommon in brilliant writers) makes us sure that life is worth living, that we become ashamed of bewilderment and of pessimism. The personal quality of conversation remains in the unself-conscious narrative, and the clear, fluent, unaffected style takes the reader out of himself.

Elizabeth Christophers Hobson was the daughter of Elijah Huntington and Sarah Wetmore Kimball. Her father's uncle was Samuel Huntington, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and her mother was the direct descendant of Samuel Hinsdale, the first settler of Deerfield, Massachusetts. Her girlhood was surrounded by that sweetly and sanely democratic atmosphere which America is inevitably losing. "In those days," she writes, "dress was simple, but we had all we required, or even wished for. There were never any discussions about money. We never thought of people as rich or poor. The only distinction we knew was between the well-bred and the reverse." Puritanism had its effect upon Mrs. Hobson's growing mind. "My grandfather was an old Puritan. Oh! how long those prayers were, and those sermons he read aloud, rainy Sundays, when we could not go the four miles to church, where, on pleasant days, we stayed to two services and Sunday school, eating